

Senior Tar Heel Legislature Pre-White House Conference on Aging Forum Recommendations

May 18, 2005

I am Vernon Dull, Speaker of the N.C. Senior Tar Heel Legislature which was established by the General Assembly in 1993 to provide information to senior citizens on the legislative process and matters being considered by the General Assembly as well as to promote citizen involvement and advocacy concerning aging issues before the General Assembly. Each county has a delegate to the Senior Tar Heel Legislature and most counties also have an alternate. Delegates and alternates must be age 60 or older.

At the annual meeting of the Senior Tar Heel Legislature in March of this year, delegates and alternates completed the survey tool entitled *Help North Carolina Guide Future National Aging Policy*. Based on the results of that survey, three issues were identified as priorities to present at this Forum. Under each of the three priority issues, key recommendations which were supported or strongly supported by the majority of the delegates and alternates were identified. The priority issues and the key recommendations under each issue are as follows:

Issue #1: Promote the Health and Health Care of Older Americans and Aging Boomers

Key Recommendations

- Assure the solvency of Medicare
- Assure the affordability of prescription drugs
- Assure adequate health care for Veterans
- Protect the individual's right to choose health care providers and make other care decisions
- Assure affordable health care for people of all ages
- Prevent any changes to Medicare that would reduce the current benefit package
- Expand geriatric training of health care workers

Issue #2: Assure the Economic Security of Older Americans and Aging Boomers

Key Recommendations

- Strengthen protections against financial fraud, abuse and exploitation
- Maintain Social Security's current structure and purposes

Issue #3: Promote Independence and Advocacy among Older Americans and Aging Boomers

Key Recommendations

- Preserve the Older Americans Act by reauthorizing it and assuring adequate funds
- Establish a strong council composed of seniors at the federal level to advise on national aging policy matters
- Strengthen availability of affordable housing designed to maximize independence
- Increase funding of Senior Centers
- Assure adequate protections and exercise of rights for residents of long-term care facilities
- Strengthen end-of-life care that seeks to meet the wishes of the individual
- Expand support of elder rights programs, such as the long-term care ombudsman program, legal assistance, and elder abuse and exploitation
- Maintain the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging and reinstate a committee on aging in the U.S. House

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to share the recommendations of the Senior Tar Heel Legislature.